

THE TORPEL TRAIL

Introducing some of the Torpel ghosts

POINT 1 The starting point is by the gate into the garden of the cabin. Look to the right of the cabin across the field to the north.

In the first century AD Roman soldiers marched up the Roman Road, King Street, on their way to Lincoln. They made a short stop on the dry ground here before crossing the swampy Welland valley ahead. The road ran along a raised bank but there was no bridge and the water reached over their knees.

By the year 600 several Saxon families were living in a cluster of wooden huts at the side of the road. they had sailed across the sea and up the river and brought seeds and livestock with them. they shared their neighbours' oxen which pulled the plough and grew wheat, oats and barley in long strips.

POINT 2 is by the fallen tree. You have walked across the fairly flat ground of the former bailey and can now see some of the ringwork. Look ahead at the dry ditch and the steep slope of the mound.

Soon after the Norman Conquest King William I's soldiers were ordered to burn down the Saxon villages and cut down trees to build a square wooden tower on a mound, protected by ditches and high fences.

Roger de Torpel was a Norman knight and first lord of Torpel Manor. He had fought at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. He had to provide 6 armed horsemen to fight for the king. His first task was to protect Peterborough Abbey from the combined attacks of the Saxons and Danes. In return he was given land scattered across 14 villages between Helpston and Oundle.

POINT 3 is on the far side of the mound. First look down towards the pond. There is water in it after wet weather and behind it, hidden in the bushes, there is a rock face of Cornbrash limestone which was quarried for stone used to build the walls round Torpel field. All the land between the field and Hilly Wood was part of Torpel deer park. Then look back over the mound.

Five generations of the Torpel family lived here, most of the lords being called Roger. One exception was Robert who had to hand the manor to his brother in 1146 because he had leprosy.

William the last of the Torpels, died without a male heir in 1242. The manor passed to his sister and her husband, Ralph de Camoys, and then to their son also called Ralph. In 1264 they were granted the right to hold a Thursday market and a 3 day fair every September at Torpel.

The Camoys family built a manor house of Barnack stone with a stone slate roof.

John Camoys, the last of the knights, had to sell Torpel manor back to the King, to pay his debts.

Walk back over the mound in the direction of the electricity pylon near Point 4. Note on your right the dip which shows the course of the main entrance way to the manor from King Street (now a kissing gate). Look for mounds and depressions in the ground, which were once the sites of a barn, sheds and stables.